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or its event. The *people* were put aside, while the crown and the clergy settled the matter between them.

COUNTRY PSALM-SINGING.

THIS rustic sort of melody is often sorely ridiculed by scientific ears; yet rude as it is, has always an impressive effect upon my heart. I do not consider it, nor in justice ought it to be considered, as *music*. It is merely a chant, or *cant*, as the satirist would say, a kind of recitative, whose chief recommendation, and no small one it is, that the *whole* congregation, old and young, male and female, with musical voice or without it, all that have heart and affections, may thus be excited, and thus bear an *active* part in the public worship. It is, on this account, a melody of the most simple and artless kind, a speaking music, scarcely amounting to singing, but yet different from speech. We are too passive in public worship. It is necessary to keep attention alive by variety of posture, or by making the congregation join in part of the service. We listen too much, and sleep often surprises us thus listening. Hence the *use* of this universal recitation, or psalmody, in a form of worship which discountenances ceremonial changes of posture and address to the senses. Our Presbyterian worship is too naked and inanimate. There is one extreme, which by a superfluity of ceremonies, quenches devotion, and occupies the mind too much with exter-

nal signs of religion, but there is another extreme, which abstracts too much from sense, and vainly attempts to be purely intellectual, the one extreme verging to idolatry, the other to mysticism, and both to be avoided by those who possess a comprehensive knowledge of human nature. I will allow, that the first extreme is the most dangerous, the mere worship of the senses being apt to pre-occupy and impose upon the heart, as the only necessary religion. Yet still public worship necessarily supposes a form and order and uniformity in worship. Hence the utility of our rude and rustic psalm-singing in our bare ceremonial. The mode of giving out the lines to be sung, or rather said, from the clerk to the congregation, in some few instances may draw down the ridicule of amateurs in poetry, as well as in music. But it is not said to be *good* poetry, nor sung as *good* music. It is the simple psalmody of a simple people. It is sweetly associated with religion, from the feelings of earliest infancy. When the soldier returns from the campaign, he stops upon the hill that surmounts his native village, arrested with the sabbath conclamation. "Ah!" says he, resting on his firelock, "how different this from the shouts I lately heard of men in the rush of battle! Ah! my father, my mother, my wife, and my children!"

X.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF DISTINGUISHED PERSONS.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF ROBERT ROBINSON.

"Unskilful he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour:

Far other aims his heart had learn'd to prize,
More bent to raise the wretched, than to rise."

GOLDSMITH.

ROBERT ROBINSON was born on the 8th of October, 1735, at

Swaffham, in the county of Norfolk. His father, Mr. Michael Robinson, a native of Scotland, was an exciseman; his mother was the daughter of Mr. Robert Wilkin, of Mildenhall, Suffolk; a man of respectability in private life, and in possession of a moderate independence. He married a widow, by whom he had two children, Robert and Mary. Mrs. Wilkin brought into the family two children by a former husband, on whom their father-in-law bestowed a good education, and towards whom he discovered so much partiality, as to cause uneasiness to the other branches of the family; a consequence too frequently resulting from that, in general, undesirable domestic connection, a second marriage. Mr. Robinson's parents were both of them members of the church of England, and their children were educated in the principles of the establishment. Mary Wilkin, Mr. Robinson's mother, was beautiful in her person, amiable in her manners, and her father bestowed on her, so far as related to the cultivation of her understanding, a good education; but his partiality to his wife's former children, rendered her so unhappy at home, that at length she, against her father's consent, married a person in an inferior station, whose disposition and habits of life were not the best calculated to render her happy, and whose unkindness to his wife was increased by the unkindness of his father-in-law. How careful should parents be to cultivate not only the understandings, but the affections of their children, and to render their home in their younger years so happy, that in forming the most important connection, a connection for life, they may naturally turn to their parents, as to their

most intimate counsellors, and best friends.

Robert was the youngest of three children; his brother was apprenticed to a painter, and his sister to a mantuamaker: Robert was sent to a Latin-school at the age of six years, where he made so considerable a proficiency, that his master soon became very fond of him, observing, that he never before knew a child who discovered such a capacity. His father was now ordered, in the course of his profession, from Swaffham to Scarning, in the same county, where being uneasy in his circumstances, he left the place, his family remaining at home, and he shortly after died at Winchester.

At Scarning, young Robinson was sent to an endowed grammar-school, then under the care of the Rev. Joseph Brett. Several persons of eminence received their education at the same school, and amongst others the late Lord Thurlow. Mrs. Robinson, however, in consequence of the unkind treatment of her father, and her own narrow circumstances, was unable, after a few years, to pay the expenses of her son's education; but the master being much attached to his pupil, and respecting the mother on account of her virtues and afflictions, continued him in the school, and instructed him gratis.

At this school, young Robinson early discovered those powers by which he was afterwards so highly distinguished. There appears to have been a mutual respect between the master and the scholar, the former gave due encouragement and commendation, and the latter strove to excel in those branches of learning in which he was educated. He gained a considerable knowledge of the French; as well as of the classical languages: he wrote a

good hand, but, as is too frequently the case at grammar schools, was defective in his knowledge of arithmetic, a branch of education which in all situations, ought not to be neglected.

At the age of fourteen, Mrs. Robinson was desirous of placing out her son as an apprentice. Mr. Brett endeavoured to procure him a situation suited to his talents and disposition; but his plan failing, young Robinson was bound to a Mr. Anderson, hair dresser, in Crutched Friars, London. Although he appears to have been for a time tolerably industrious at his trade, yet his love of literature shortly convinced his master, that hair dressing, shaving, and wig-making, were not his *forte*. When out on business, he would frequently return with his pockets loaded with old books, purchased from different stalls. He would generally be at his books by four or five o'clock in the morning; this practice of early rising grew into a habit: in after life, he could not only preach excellently and eloquently on the subject, as in his Village Exercises, but what is not always the case with preachers his instructions were constantly enforced by his example. He adopted the Latin adage, *Mane Musis amicum*, the morning is favourable to the muses. It is not improbable, that this habit was acquired from his mother, who, even at the age of upwards of eighty, used to rise at four in the morning. Mr. Robinson never appears to have been ashamed of his employment in early life; it was not unfrequently the subject of his conversation: this was one proof of his genuine good sense: the aristocratical airs of some in the middle classes of life, the sneers frequently indulged against respectable persons on account of their trade, are equally irrational and un-

christian-like, and are to men who have just ideas of the natural dignity and equality of mankind, peculiarly disgusting.

Robert Robinson appears, during his apprenticeship, to have imbibed serious impressions of religion. He occasionally attended the most celebrated preachers of the day amongst the Independents, Baptists, the clergy termed Evangelical, and the Methodists.

He does not appear, during his residence in London, to have joined himself as a member to any particular church, but frequently communicated with the Methodists in Mr. Whitfield's connection. At the age of nineteen, he, encouraged by others, had some view to the ministerial office: amongst other methods he made use of to prepare himself for speaking in public, he would occasionally preach for an hour together to himself; and it is not an improbable conjecture, that it was by this means he acquired that admirable mode of delivering his discourses, which, in the opinion of Dr. Price, rendered him, in this respect, without an equal.

Having received his indentures from his master, and leaving behind him an unblemished character in London, he went to his native country, Norfolk. Here he commenced a preacher among the Methodists. The innocence of his youth, the agreeableness of his manners, and the enthusiasm of his genius, all conspired to render him popular.

Although Mr. Robinson had a considerable degree of respect and affection for Mr. Whitfield, it appears, that even at his first setting out in the religious world, he had learned that important lesson, which his life and writings so forcibly inculcate—*Call no man master or father upon earth*; for when he was about

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twenty years of age, he, somewhat to the surprise of Mr. Whitfield, was found preaching amongst the methodists. His first sermon was addressed to a small congregation at Mildenhall in Suffolk: he was soon after invited to preach at the Tabernacle, in Norwich, and at several places in Norfolk and Cambridgeshire: his sermons were not unfrequently preached with little, and sometimes without any preparation: he delivered them extempore, which method he observed to the close of his pulpit labours.

Mr. Robinson kept a regular diary of the occurrences of each day. A journal, as a kind of check to the waywardness of passion, or any frivolity of character, or as a register of the most important transactions of life, presents nothing vain or enthusiastic. This practice has been adopted by the wisest and most rational of mankind. The folly and vanity consists in recording frivolous pursuits and uninteresting occurrences with an air of seriousness; and in concealing spiritual pride under the language of humility. In his London diary, Robinson makes the following memorandum. "I went to dine on a goose: after service, I went to Mr. M——'s to supper, and had part of a pudding, made of some rice, sent by my dear spiritual father.*" Such things may be forgiven in the hasty scribble of a young apprentice, but how many things equally ridiculous, and infinitely more offensive, recur in those journals which he received as models.

He continued preaching amongst the methodists for about two years, during which period he appears to have turned his attention more particularly to the controversy between the members of the established church and the dissenters,

and to have resolved to take his lot with the latter. A temptation to join the former, too powerful for any but a man of christian integrity to repel, presented itself. A rich relation who had promised to provide liberally for him, and who had bequeathed him a considerable sum in his will, threatened to deprive him of every advantage which he had been encouraged to expect, unless he quitted his connection with the dissenters: but the rights of conscience, and the approbation of God, were superior, in his regard, to every worldly consideration: he preserved his integrity steadily maintained his principles, and persevered in his connection with the dissenters; but forfeited the favour of his relation, and every advantage which, living or dying, he had in his power to bestow.

Shortly after leaving the methodists, Mr. Robinson formed a small independent calvinistic church at Norwich, during his connection with which, he administered infant baptism; but on his leaving this church, he relinquished the practice, and became an antipædobaptist: his opinion, in this respect, he firmly, although without bigotry, retained to the close of life: he was baptised, by immersion, at Ellingham, in Norfolk.

In the spring of the year 1759, he received an invitation to preach to a small congregation of Baptists, at Cambridge, but continued, for prudential reasons, for two years on probation, before he settled: about the same time, he married Miss Ellen Payne, to whom he had paid his addresses during his residence at Norwich.

Mr. Robinson, on his settlement, was ordained according to the customary mode amongst the Dissenters. The congregation at Cam-

* George Whitfield.

bridge, on Mr. Robinson's first settlement, was in all respects in a very low state: it is described by himself, at an after period of his life, as follows:

"The settlement of Robinson seems rather a romantic, than a rational undertaking: for this pastor was to be maintained. He had not received above ten guineas from his own family for some years: he had no future prospect of receiving any: his grandfather had cut him off with a legacy of half-a-guinea. He had received only an hundred pounds with his wife, and this he had diminished among the Methodists. He had never inquired what this congregation would allow him, nor had any body proposed any thing. They had paid him, for the first half year, £3. 12s. 5d.; they had increased since, but not enough to maintain him frugally; there was no prospect of so poor a people supplying him long, especially should his family increase, which it was likely to do. Besides, the congregation, through the libertinism of many of its former members, had acquired a bad character. These would have been insurmountable difficulties to an older and a wiser man; but he was a boy, and the love of his flock was a million to him. His settlement, therefore, on this article, should be no future precedent for future settlements."

In a note, he adds, "The support of this church has always been by a quarterly voluntary subscription paid to the deacons. During the first years of his ministry, the annual income kept increasing, from the small beginning mentioned, to 25, 30, 35, 40, 50 pounds, in succeeding years; and about the year 1770, it amounted to upwards of £90. Since that year, it has decreased, and of late increased again. The perpetual changes of the subscribers,

by deaths, removals, &c., have always rendered the income so variable, that it has never been two years together the same."

Mr. Robinson, on his settlement at Cambridge, resided with a member of his congregation at Fulbourn, a village about five miles distant. He shortly removed from Fulbourn to Hauxton, a village about the same distance from Cambridge, on the London road. Here he lived several years in an humble cottage, his family increasing, and his means of support so scanty, that he could with difficulty have procured the common necessities of life without the occasional assistance of friends. The advantages attendant on obscurity no one better understood to improve than Robinson. Possessed of gentle manners, and a tender heart, of a modest demeanour, and a teachable disposition, he became the idol of the poor, and gained the esteem of all. In his agreeable solitude, two pursuits, besides a regard to his family, engrossed his attention,—the raising of a congregation, and the advancement of his studies. For the former, who, by native sweetness, by early associations, by settled habits, could be better fitted? He had little occasion to learn, what some preachers never understand, at least never practice, the art of stooping to the poor: and it was unnecessary for him to study the art of climbing in the church. His manners were unvarnished by the frivolities of a polite education; his heart uninflated by false greatness. Unacquainted with the fashionable world, he yet knew mankind; experiments on himself had given him an extraordinary insight into the human character, and into the springs of human conduct. The features most strongly impressed on his countenance were those of genius and benevolence: these

marked him for a superior man. He possessed in a high degree what charms discerning persons of whatever rank or condition, "that politeness, which," as some one prettily expresses it, "is an happy mixture of greatness and benignity, the sunshine from the soul on our words and actions."

Mr. Robinson did not qualify, that is, take the oaths which dissenting ministers are obliged to take, if they wish to enjoy the benefits of the act of uniformity, till October 1775. To occasional instances of rudeness he had sometimes been exposed, through his situation, near an university: prudence, therefore, instructed him to avail himself of legal security, having been assured, that by omitting it, he would expose himself to further inconvenience. In 1774, he observes, that had he seen things in the light he did then, he would have run every hazard rather than have qualified in that manner.

In his retired situation at Hauxton, Mr. Robinson was most sedulously engaged in the pursuit of his studies, in fulfilling the duties of the pastoral office, and, in what he peculiarly excelled, village preaching: there were indeed few villages in the county where his labours were not exercised, and attended with uncommon success. His condescension to the poor, even to children, and his endeavours to promote their temporal and spiritual welfare, made him almost their idol. He made frequent visits to the poor cottagers in the neighbourhood of his residence; and how edifying and interesting was the sight of a great man, who had for his intimate friends the most learned members of one of the first universities in the world, sitting with his pipe in the chimney corner of a cottager, conversing in a manner the most peculiarly adapted to please and to improve. His labours

were indeed *abundant*: besides his steadily preaching on the Sabbath, twice, sometimes three times, he preached several lectures on the week days, not only in the evening, but at six in the morning; at the same time taking care that these exercises should not interfere with the necessary labours of the poor, as he discontinued his lectures on the week days during the hay and harvest seasons.

From a number of letters written by Mr. R. it seems evident that almost at the outset of his public life he entertained just and enlarged sentiments of civil and religious liberty, and a detestation and contempt of priestcraft, as it appears in a greater or less degree, not only in established churches, but in those who dissent from them.

The congregation at Cambridge experienced, in a few years after the settlement of their pastor, such an increase both in numbers and respectability, as to render a larger and more commodious place of worship indispensably necessary: the old meeting-house was pulled down, and a new one erected at the expense of the congregation: their pastor felt great satisfaction at their conduct, as he had an aversion to a society involving itself in debt, or depending on others for assistance. In mentioning the trust-deed, Mr. Robinson observes, "the subscribers and purchasers, as well as the present trust, aimed at no dominion, and will submit to no slavery. They did all they could to secure the same independency to their successors, and wished to inspire them with a just terror of that worst of all animals, a lord-brother." An animal we may remark, equally disgusting, whether clothed in a lay, or a clerical habit.

In the year 1770, Mr. Robin-

son printed a translation of two or three sermons of Mons. Saurin.

In 1772, he published, *A Sermon preached to a society of young people, at Willingham, in Cambridgeshire, on the nature and necessity of early piety.* This was shortly followed by his *Arcana; or the principles of the late petitioners to Parliament, for relief in matter of subscription, in eight letters to a friend.* This was written at a period when Dissenting ministers and schoolmasters were by law required to subscribe thirty-six, and part of a thirty-seventh, of the thirty-nine articles of the established church; but as the generality of them, to their honour, had long refused to submit to this unjust requisition, their situation was somewhat precarious: after two appeals, in which the bill for their relief, although it passed the Commons, was, owing to the opposition of the Bishops, rejected by the Lords, they made a third appeal, which proved successful, and the bill passed both houses without opposition.

In June, 1773, Mr. Robinson removed from Hauxton to Chesterton, a pleasant village by the river side, about two miles from Cambridge. His family now consisted of a wife, nine children, and his aged mother. One of his children died at Hauxton in infancy. Neither his income, nor the produce of his literary labours were sufficient to provide for the necessary wants of so large a family; he therefore turned his thoughts to other pursuits. In the course of two or three years he was engaged in various agricultural concerns; made several purchases of copyhold houses and lands, and was much employed in alterations and improvements; he hired the ferry adjoining his house, and would frequently employ himself in ferrying passengers across the river:

he was also a considerable dealer in coals and corn. His agricultural and mercantile pursuits were, it should seem in general successful, as he maintained his family in reputation: although he received at different times pecuniary favours from friends, their total amount, in addition to his stated income, and the profits arising from his literary concerns were by no means adequate to the support of his family.

Our limits will not allow a more particular account of Mr. Robinson's secular employments. How some of his days were spent may be learned from a curious letter written to one of his most intimate friends.*

It would be no less agreeable than instructive, to survey Robinson's rural economy, and domestic arrangements in his different situations. The versatility of his genius was uncommon; and whether he was making a bargain, repairing an house, stocking a farm, giving directions to workmen, or assisting their labours, he was the same invariable man, displaying no less vigour in the execution of his plans, than ingenuity in their contrivance. The readiness with which he passed from literary pursuits to rural occupations, from rural occupations to domestic engagements, from domestic engagements to the forming of plans for Dissenting ministers, to the settling of churches, to the solving of cases of conscience, to the removing of the difficulties of ignorant, or the softening of the asperities of quarrelsome brethren, was surprising.

Mr. Robinson, in spite of the prejudices cherished too generally in the Christian world, justly concluded

* See Belfast Monthly Magazine, vol. 2nd, page 434.

ed, that engaging in secular concerns, so far from being dishonourable to a minister of the gospel, was, in certain circumstances, truly honourable. His sentiments on this subject, it is to be lamented, are not more prevalent. To the censures which certain *clericals* passed on his conduct, he disdained a serious reply. "Godly boobies," he would exclaim, "too idle, many of them, to work, too ignorant to give instruction, and too conceited to study, spending their time in tattling and mischief,—are these the men to direct my conduct, to censure my industry?"

It is indeed truly surprising, that any man should dare to censure a Christian teacher, who works with his *own hands*, in order that he may *provide things honest in the sight of all men*, and obtain an honourable independence.

But it may perhaps be objected, that a minister, by engaging in secular employments, may render himself unfit for the duties of his pastoral office; in answer to which it may be asked, What duties? Will any one say, that an hour or two daily spent in reading and studying, would not be sufficient to enable a Christian teacher to address his congregation in a manner well calculated to promote their edification.

It seems to be universally allowed, that there is one secular employment, if honestly attended to, a most laborious one, which is not thought derogatory to the character of a minister; I mean that of a school-master. Why are not the various commercial or mechanical occupations in which mankind are usually engaged, equally honourable?

How many instances are there in the established church, and amongst the different denominations of Dissenters, in which a minister is, owing

to the sentiments instilled into him at the college, or the academy, and his subsequent habits of life, reduced to the unhappy situation of the unjust steward? *He cannot dig, and to beg he is ashamed!*

Mr. Robinson was in a similar manner distinguished for his sentiments respecting the nature of the *office*, the *titles*, and the *dress* of Christian ministers. All the members of a Christian church he considered as perfectly equal in religious rights; and was firmly of opinion, that whenever they chose to delegate any portion of their joint authority to a pastor, or other church officers, such officers were to be considered, not as governors, or masters, acquiring dominion, in matters of doctrine or discipline, but as servants of the church, possessed of their office in trust, for the good of the whole, to be regulated, limited, or resumed at pleasure.

The pompous *titles* assumed by Christian ministers of almost every church and sect, were to Mr. Robinson the subject of equal dislike and ridicule. "I wonder," said he, in a letter to a friend, "any man should be so silly as to call me *Reverend*." Is not the epithet of *Reverend* claimed by the Deity equally with that of *Holy*? Has the pastor of a Dissenting church, who arrogates this epithet, a right to complain of the Bishop of Rome for arrogating the attribute of "*holiness*?"

With respect to the *dress* of Christian ministers, Mr. Robinson had an utter dislike to the gown, the cassock, the cloak, and the band, all of which distinctions he thought tended to confirm the erroneous opinions which people in general have of the nature of the ministerial office. He had no objection to an academic appearing in the habit to which his degree entitled him; but

a Dissenting minister, who aped the dress of the established clergy, was always the subject of his ridicule. Although he so far accommodated himself to the prejudices of the people, as commonly to appear in black or grey, he occasionally wore different coloured clothes; and the teacher was equally welcome to his pulpit, whether habited in a coat of black, blue, drab, or any other colour, with buttons covered or metal.

In 1773, Mr. Robinson published, *A Discussion of the question, "Is it lawful and right for a man to marry the sister of his deceased wife?"* which was subjoined to *The legal degrees of Marriage stated and considered, by John Alleyne, Barrister at Law.* This tract was written at the request of the late Dr. Stennett, and Mr. Josiah Thompson, Baptist ministers, well known in the religious world. Our author argued the affirmative side of the question.

In the year 1775, Mr. Robinson published the first volume of a translation from the French of the sermons of *Mons. Saurin*, pastor of the French Protestant church at the Hague, which was followed, at intervals, by three more volumes, the last of which appeared in 1782. Two years afterwards, was published a second edition, together with an additional volume, to which was added, a translation of "*An Essay on the conduct of David at the court of Achish, King of Gath.*" By Mr. Dumont, pastor of the French church at Rotterdam."

In 1776, Mr. Robinson published, "*A Lecture on a becoming behaviour in religious assemblies,*" preached three years before.

About this time, (1776,) the controversy respecting the divinity of Christ, which had been carried on principally by members of the church of England, some of whom had, from the most conscientious

motives, resigned their preferments, much engaged the public attention. Mr. Robinson appeared on the popular side of the question, and published, "*A Plea for the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ,*" in a pastoral letter, addressed to a congregation of Protestant Dissenters at Cambridge.

The following year, Mr. Robinson published, "*The History and the Mystery of Good Friday,*" a small pamphlet, that has run through numerous large editions, and in which the evil, and the foolishness of church holidays is with equal humour, learning, and argument, unanswerably demonstrated. Displeasing as were the plain truths abounding in this tract to many of the clergy, some of them could not help expressing their admiration.

In 1778, Mr. Robinson published "*A Plan of Lectures, on the principles of non conformity, for the instruction of Catechumens.*"

In 1782, Mr. Robinson published, "*A Political Catechism;*" intended to convey, in a familiar manner, just ideas of good civil government, and the British constitution. This tract was written at the time the *North* administration was discarded from the councils of their sovereign, for that of the Marquis of Rockingham. "To support the system professed by the latter, to disseminate safe political principles, to place public happiness on its true base—public political virtue, which are the duties of all good citizens," were the motives which induced our author "to endeavour to attract the attention of youth on this subject." The Catechism is written with much ingenuity and originality, and peculiarly calculated for the instruction as well as entertainment of young people. This work, as well as the preface to the *Plan of Lectures*, one of his "*Vil-*

lage Discourses, and his sermon entitled—"Christian Submission to civil Government," afford ample evidence of the soundness of his principles as a friend to civil government in general, and to that form of civil government, the British constitution, in particular.

In 1786, Mr. Robinson published "Sixteen Discourses on several Texts of Scripture, addressed to Christian Assemblies, in Villages near Cambridge: to which are added, Six Morning Exercises."

The manner in which these discourses were afterwards prepared for the press affords a remarkable instance of the author's powers of recollection: they were written by his relative and amanuensis, Mr. Curtis, to whom Mr. Robinson, while sitting, or walking about the room smoking his pipe, dictated every sentence, the texts of scripture, stops, the different characters, italics, capitals, &c. They were then revised by the author; but little alteration was made in any of them, before they were sent to the press.

Mr. Robinson printed, at different times, single sermons preached on public occasions, most of them at the request of his auditors. These discourses are distinguished by their originality, simplicity, elegance, and piety.

He likewise frequently employed his pen on different occasions. He assisted the late learned and excellent Dr. Kippis in drawing up one of the articles in the "*Biographia Britannica*;" and begun a translation of the "*Revolution de Paris*," a periodical work of considerable merit but of which three numbers only appeared in English: he drew up "A Plan of a Charity School, for the Education of the Boys and Girls of Protestant Dissenters, at Cambridge."

His two largest works are "The

History of Baptism," and "Ecclesiastical Researches," each consisting of between six and seven hundred closely printed quarto pages, and which were only parts of a still larger work, sketched by the author; they were not published till after his death.

Many of the principal persons of the Baptist denomination, had long lamented that they had no authentic history of their brethren, particularly of this country, and deeming Crosby's History, which had hitherto been the only one deserving attention, both inaccurate and ill-written, turned their thoughts to Mr. Robinson as a proper person to write such a work as might do honour to the denomination. Some of his London friends accordingly associated and formed a committee, the first meeting of which was held at the King's Head tavern, in the Poultry, Nov. 6, 1781. Various resolutions were agreed to. Mr. Robinson was invited to undertake the work. Dr. Giffard, the chairman, at that time librarian to the British Museum, offered him an apartment in his house for the purpose of consulting manuscripts. It was also proposed that Mr. R. should visit London for ten days in every month, preach various lectures, and that a subscription should be entered into to defray his expenses.

Such was Mr. Robinson's popularity as a preacher, that as soon as it was understood he had agreed to visit London at stated periods, he was eagerly applied to, for his services, at different places: the multiplicity of his pulpit-labours may be judged of, by the following extract of a letter from his friend Mr. Keene

"As in your favour of the 26th of March, you desired me to adjust your preaching times, with the ap-

probation of your friends, they are as follow :

" Tuesday evening, April 15, at Mr. Rippon's.
 Thursday morning, April 17, at Dr. Stafford's.
 Lord's day morning, April 20, at Dr. Rees's.
 Lord's day afternoon, April 20, at Maze Pond.
 Lord's day evening, April 20, at Little St. Helen's.
 Monday evening, April 21, at Maze Pond Vestry.
 Tuesday evening, April 22, at Mr. Rippon's.
 Wednesday morning April 23, at Maze Pond."

Mr. Robinson's discourses, during his visits to the metropolis, were delivered to audiences equally crowded and attentive.

It may naturally be supposed that so much preaching, together with so much visiting in the social circle as it was impossible to avoid, afforded him little leisure to examine manuscripts, and write history. After a few months trial, his plan of studying in London was relinquished : but it was pursued at home ; where he obtained, through the kindness of some of the masters of arts in the university of Cambridge, not only free access to the public library, but the privilege of having the books he wished to consult, conveyed to his own study. A subscription was entered into to enable him to publish the work ; and the list of subscribers proved to be numerous and respectable.

Mr. Robinson employed a considerable part of the remaining years of his life, except the last, when his health and spirits began to languish, in writing the " History of Baptism," and " Ecclesiastical Researches."

As a christian philanthropist, Mr. Robinson's character shines with peculiar lustre. His mind was habitually employed in devising plans

for the benefit of society, and of individuals ; his life was one continued labour for the good of others : the wants, both temporal and spiritual, of the poorest, the very lowest rank of society lay near his heart.

Few men have been so well acquainted with the foundation principles of good government, or have inculcated such just sentiments of civil and religious liberty, as Mr. Robinson. His writings on these subjects, which evidently shew he had studied in the school of those great masters, Milton and Locke, were enforced by his own example. He was ever ready to assist in public schemes for the promotion of those grand objects. He had the principal hand in forming, and was an active member of a " Society for Constitutional Information," established at Cambridge, and which, with many societies of a similar nature in different parts of the kingdom, continued to flourish, till they were slandered, discouraged, and at length overthrown under the Pitt administration. With all the other friends to the best interests of mankind, he was a warm admirer of the French revolution, at the period when it shone in all its glory, under the direction of the national constituent assembly. He did not live to witness those crimes by which it was afterwards obscured, the principal share of the guilt of which rests on the heads of the coalesced sovereigns of Europe, for their most unprincipled attempt to destroy the liberties of France, and to invade, devastate, and divide the country ; which attempt maddened the whole kingdom, and gave opportunity to a set of men assuming the name of republicans, but who were the enemies of all good government, to vie with the invaders of their country in criminality. Mr. Robinson was a warm admirer of the American constitution

tion. His talents and worth were so well known, that very handsome proposals were made to him to settle in the United States: but his attachment to his native country was similar to that of our admired poet Cowper:

“England, with all thy faults, I love thee still!”

INTOLERANCE, in all its forms, was the peculiar object of his detestation. “Always when I met it, in a course of reading,” he observes, “I thought I met the great devil; and my resentment was never abated by his appearing in the habit of a holy man of God.” Religious Liberty was to him almost an object of adoration: he refused to accept the pastoral office at Cambridge, till the congregation had agreed to throw down the wall of partition, which till then had divided them from their independent brethren. Good men of all denominations were welcome to his house, his heart, and his pulpit.

As a Preacher, Mr. Robinson ranks in the highest class, and we may safely claim for him the very summit of his own denomination. His merits in this respect are well described by Dr. Toulmin.—“His preaching was altogether without notes; a method in which he was peculiarly happy; not by trusting to his memory entirely, nor by working himself to a degree of warmth and passion, to which the preachers among whom he first appeared commonly owe their ready utterance, but by thoroughly studying, and making himself perfectly master of his subject, and a certain faculty of expression which is never at a loss for suitable and proper words. His manner was admirably adapted to enlighten the understanding, and to affect and reform the heart. He had such a plainness of speech, such an easy and apparent method in dividing a

discourse, and such a familiar way of reasoning, as discovered an heart filled with the tenderest concern for the meanest of his hearers, and yet there was a decency, propriety, and justness that the most judicious could not but approve.”

The crowning excellence of this great and good man's character was,—His ardent love of truth, the sincerity and impartiality, with which he sought, and the honesty with which he practised it. These are the Grand Essentials without which no man can, in the sight of God, be a christian, and possessing which, no one has a right to say—He is not a christian. This noble disposition impelled him, as we have seen, at various periods of his life to sacrifice his worldly interests to what he considered the cause of truth: the same disposition enabled him to avoid that rock, popular applause, on which such numbers have split, who *loved the praise of men more than the praise of God*. With a mind constantly open to conviction; can it excite surprise, if, as he advanced in life, he saw reason to alter some of his sentiments on doctrinal points? What they were towards the close of his life, has been the subject of much speculation, and much misrepresentation.

In 1777, Mr. Robinson had the misfortune to fall from a coach, and sprain his ankle. This misfortune long prevented him from pursuing his usual labours, and deprived him of preaching lectures in the villages where his congregation lived. He endeavoured to console himself, and assist his brethren, by revising, enlarging, and publishing an *éssay* on the composition of a sermon, translated from the French of John Claude.

In several letters from his friends, in 1777, to Robinson, are expressions of condolence, on account of his indisposition, and of ad-

vice to be less eager and restless in his literary pursuits. But to such advice he rarely felt himself at leisure to attend; and to his imprudent indefatigable zeal he at length fell a victim. From a well organized system, unimpaired by intemperance, he might long have enjoyed all the vigour of health, and all the hilarity of spirits.

His characteristic feature, was love of liberty. The tendency of his numerous writings goes rather to demolish systems of tyranny, than to erect the tyranny of opinion; to emancipate the human understand-

ing; to prepare it for fair investigation; to enable it to preserve, as it were, a natural tone, a personal vigour; not to bend it by compulsory rules, to vassalise it by mean observances, or to enclose it by fantastic theories. All Robinson's writings proceed on the Dissenters' principles; but though full of hostile designs on the church, they assumed not the air of a direct attack. His friendships could not win him over to be a churchman, but they softened the rigour of the Dissenter.

(To be continued)

DETACHED ANECDOTES.

A SEED OF CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT UNION, SOWN IN 1784.

WE, whose names are subscribed, associate together, as a military body, under the title of the **NEWRY UNION**. We associate as Volunteer soldiers, in order to maintain our rights as citizens. We are all sensible of the value of liberty, and we all desire to possess the power of preserving it. We associate, in order to form a part of that Volunteer army, whose institution we venerate, whose principles we adopt as our own, and in whose cause we are ready to lay down our lives. We associate, although differing in religious opinions, because we wish to create that union of power, and to cultivate that brotherhood of affection among *all* the inhabitants of this Island, which is the interest as well as duty of all. We are all **IRISHMEN**. We rejoice and glory in that common title, which binds us together; and we associate, in order to do every thing, that the union of our hearts, and the strength of our hands, can effectuate, to render

the name of **IRISHMAN** honourable to ourselves, serviceable to our beloved country, and formidable to its foes! We shall ever think, that an association deserves well of our native land, whose chief object is to unite *the different descriptions of religion in the cause of our common country*, and although we cannot lay claim to the honour of having first taken up arms, there is still a glorious ambition left,—not to be among the last in laying them down!

X.

SOCIETY.

The Diamond is a charcoal. It consists of the same materials, under a different composition, the same particles differently organized. So it is in the organization of human society. The materials are the same, but in *one* disposition of the particles which compose it, how black, and unpromising the mass, how it absorbs, and never once returns the light of day, how vile and trodden under foot!—In *another* conformation of the very same particles,